



## June 2006 JET NEWSLETTER

### Notes from the Field:

*☞ Each month this space will be devoted to describing how local offices are turning policy into practice.*

*Want to know more about "Darlene" from the triage story?*

"Darlene" has 4 children 18 years of age to 6. While Darlene had been employed long term (over 9 years) as a result of her first contact with DHS supportive services, she then suffered from an illness that put her on disability. She then applied again for supportive services from DHS. Child support, although applied for, has not been a constant source of income/support.

### More innovations from Oakland County

#### *Engaging the "deferred" population*

The Madison Heights DHS office offered an optional orientation for their deferred clients to make them aware of the policy changes generated by the TANF work participation requirements and the JET program. The staff was thrilled to see a 50% response rate for a non-mandatory orientation- 70 attendees out of 140 invited. The orientation included staff from DHS, MRS, MWA and the 4Cs organization. The orientation was customized to the needs of the population, a large majority of which is applying for SSI but is served under TANF until their SSI determination is completed. Part of the orientation covered the question: what if I am not approved for disability, what then? For those who had questions about employment and SSI benefits, information on SSI policy and their rights was shared. According to Tony Anzaldi, JET coordinator at the Madison Heights DHS office, many of these clients feel disconnected and alone, in part because very few DHS services are available to them in the "deferred" status. The orientation offered a chance to re-connect, to be involved. Says Mr. Anzaldi, "Some of these folks stayed around for another hour after the orientation just to talk to the four agency representatives on hand. They are hungry for information." The success of the orientation has prompted Tony to plan additional speakers- and he is inviting those clients who were interested to help formulate plans for upcoming events.

#### *Using triage to maximize client employment retention*

The DHS and MWA staffs are bolstering employment retention by using triage meetings to identify services that will help clients keep their jobs. As Tony Anzaldi, JET coordinator at the Madison Heights DHS office, says, "When a client gets a job, on the books that might look like a success story. However, we need to help that client keep her

job, and that's what we use the triage meeting for. The client sees the benefit of meeting with us because we are going to work with her to get her the additional supports she needs to be successful in that job."

*Supporting front line staff who work with JET clients*

To prepare the staff assigned to work with JET clients, the Madison Heights DHS office offered a mental health training for its four JET workers and its client intake workers. According to Dorothy Butler, Madison Heights DHS District Manager, the purpose of the training was to increase the staff's knowledge of and skills in mental health since JET workers' job duties include more up-front assessments of clients. Madison Heights also retrained its JET staff in Strength Based/ Solution Focused interviewing and community resources, including resources used by its children's services staffs as these client populations often overlap. By improving their own skills and knowledge base, JET workers are more likely to be successful when using new assessment procedures and forms associated with JET.

The next phase of training will include the office's triage partners in a Team Decision Making training model. According to Ms. Butler, the model has been very successful in working with families in the child welfare system in Michigan and other states and the staff feels it will benefit their JET families.

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